Obit

Fr. Gerold Koller

Fr. Gerold Koller, C.PP.S., 87, died at 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, Nov. 18 in the infirmary of St. Charles Center in Carthagena. He had been in failing health for some time.

Fr. Koller was born Sept. 5, 1923 in Buffalo, N.Y., to Peter and Magdelina (Kaelin) Koller.

He entered the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1937 and was ordained on March 25, 1949.

After his ordination, Fr. Koller served as an assistant pastor at St. Wenceslaus Church in Cleveland and St. Joseph Church in Wapakoneta. From 1957 to 1963, he was director of seminarians at St. Charles Seminary. In 1963, he was named chaplain of the Modesto State Hospital in Modesto, Calif. Later, he served as a chaplain for many years to juvenile and adult offenders in the California prison system.

Fr. Koller retired to St. Charles Center in 1993. He ministered at the Mercer County Home for many years after his retirement.

Fr. Koller is survived by his only sibling, June Marie Jandrok, Converse, Tex.; two nephews and one niece; and four great-nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by a brother-in-law, Al Jandrok.

Fr. Koller was entirely devoted to his faith and to the people he served, said his sister. The inmates at the facilities where he worked found him eminently approachable. Fr. Paul Aumen, C.PP.S., who was ordained the same year as Fr. Koller, said that when he was named a prison chaplain, "everyone who knew him was sure that he would not work in a conventional way—sitting in a small office with a desk between him and the ward."

Instead, Fr. Koller, who was physically fit for nearly all his life, walked the track in the prison yard. Inmates who wanted to talk with him fell in step with him, and in those relatively open surroundings found it easier to open up to him. He was, Fr. Aumen said, the chaplain in most demand in the prison system.

A Mass of Christian burial for Fr. Koller was held on Saturday, Nov. 20, 2010 at 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel of the Assumption at St. Charles. The Rev. Larry Hemmelgarn, C.PP.S., presided.